**OUR TALKATIVE GOD**

**(Daniel 2:1-30)**

 Have you ever met anybody who could be described as chatty? Do you know anyone who likes to talk, and does so freely? Some people have the gift of gab.

 When I went to one church as the new pastor, the minister of education gave me a list of names and told me, “These are the people you don’t want to get caught on the phone with.” He was right.

 Just yesterday, someone told me that an extrovert will take 10 minutes to tell you something that only needed 1 minute. Do you know anybody like that? By the way, that is a yes or no question, not a fill in the blank question.

 As I read the Bible, it occurs to me that God Himself likes to talk, and He does so often, but He doesn’t always use words to communicate. According to Psalm 19, God uses the objects in space to proclaim His power and glory. The first four verses of that psalm claims:

**1**The heavens proclaim the glory of God.
    The skies display his craftsmanship.
**2**Day after day they continue to speak;
    night after night they make him known.
**3**They speak without a sound or word;
    their voice is never heard.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+19%3A1-5&version=NLT#fen-NLT-14148a)]
**4**Yet their message has gone throughout the earth,
    and their words to all the world.

 The stars, the planets and their moons, and all of the heavenly objects—comets, quasars, nebulae—they all have much to say about the majesty of our God. What do they say? He’s creative. He’s powerful. He’s wise. He’s big, and He’s been around a long, long time. You might say he’s eternal.

 God has spoken in other ways. The very first verse of Hebrews says, “Long ago, God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets” (1:1). In the very next verse, we find, “But now in these final days, He has spoken to us through His Son.”

 Throughout this book, the Bible refers to itself as the word of God. This is the written word of God.

 In John 1:1, Jesus is said to be the word, and in John 1:14 we find that the word became flesh. While this is the written word of God, Jesus is the incarnate word of God. He finally and fully communicates what God the Father is like.

 In short, God speaks through nature, through prophets, through the Bible, through Jesus. God likes to talk, but are we listening? Are we paying attention?

 Tonight, we come to Daniel 2. We are going to look at the first 30 verses. In this passage, we will discover that God is a God who reveals; He is a God makes things known. You and I serve a talkative God.

 Let’s begin by reading vv. 1-30. As a way of familiarizing yourself with this passage. Let me make two observations. First, this chapter is known as a chiasm. A chiasm follows a certain order such as A, B, C, and then it reverses the order, C, B, A. Look at Genesis 9:6. That is a chiastic verse.

 This passage goes A, B, C, B, A. It starts with the residence of the King, the palace of the King, Daniel’s house, the palace of the King, and then the residence of the King. The fine point of the chiastic spear takes place in the house of Daniel. That episode ends with a prayer of praise. The prayer of praise makes it clear that Daniel knows what He knows because God communicated it to him.

 Let’s look in the passage in another way. It follows what is called the narrative arc. All good stories follow this pattern. If you want to write a moving story, you need to use the narrative arc. It starts with a setting and an event. As the story is told, the tension begins to rise, and it leads to a climax. Eventually, something happens that brings about a resolution. In Daniel 2 we have the setting and the event. The King has a dream. He makes an impossible request.

 The seers say, “Tell us.”

 He says, “No.”

 “You tell me, or you will die.”

 Daniel asks, “What’s going on?” He asks for some time. He prays and asks his buddies to pray also.

 At the top of the climax, God reveals the King’s dream to Daniel and what it means.

1. **OUR TALKATIVE GOD COMMUNICATES WITH SOME THROUGH DREAMS.**

God wanted to talk to King Nebuchadnezzar, but the King didn’t know the God of heaven. He didn’t have a personal relationship with Him. I suppose God could have sent a prophet to speak to the King, but God knew the King wouldn’t listen; so, God chose to communicate with him in another way. He used a dream.

 When God wants to say something, does He ever use dreams? He did so often in the Bible. In the OT, the Pharaoh had a dream, and God used Joseph to interpret the dream. In the NT, God told another Joseph to take Mary as his wife. In a dream, He told the wise men to not go back home through Jerusalem. Then, He told Joseph to take his family to Egypt to escape the murderous plot of Herod.

 Look at what we are told in Job 33:14-17a. God can use dreams to communicate if He wishes, and sometimes He wishes. Before Scripture was written and read to the people, God would use visions to speak to His prophets, and His prophets would declare his word to the people.

 Samuel is considered the last of the judges and the first of the prophets. We read about the calling of Samuel in 1 Samuel 3. Notice what v. 1 says, “And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision.”

 You and I live in a day when the totality of the Bible has been given. It has been translated into our native language. It is widely available and easily obtained. Neither you nor I need God to give us a dream or a vision in order to speak to us. He can and does speak to us through the Bible. To hear from Him, we need to prayerfully and humbly read His word.

 Listen to the following article:

 For decades, a well-documented phenomenon has been occurring in the Muslim world—men and women who, without knowledge of the gospel, or contact among Christians in their community, have experienced dreams and visions of Jesus Christ. The reports of these supernatural occurrences often come from “closed countries” where there is no preaching of the good news and where converting to Christianity can invoke the death sentence. But these are more than just dreams. Setting them apart is the intense reality of the experience and the surrender of one’s heart and mind to Christ in the wake of the dream. A common denominator appears to be that the dreams come to those who are seeking—as best they can—to know and please God.

 Beginning in 2002, a group of people interested in this phenomenon took initial steps in bringing it to the attention of a worldwide audience through a series of video programs. Numerous on-site interviews were conducted with former Muslims who had experienced a dream or vision of Jesus resulting in their conversion to Christianity. From the outset, the producers endeavored to represent a global cross-section of Islam in the series, and for that reason, stories were sought in Arabic-speaking countries, Muslim areas throughout Africa and Asia and the secular Muslim nation of Turkey.

 The article goes on to share the story of five Muslims who came to faith in Christ after having a dream of Jesus.

 One high profile pastor, whom I happen to respect, considers such stories of people coming to faith in Christ because of a dream to be highly suspicious.

 I am going to disagree with him at this point. God can speak however He wishes to speak. We need to let God be God instead of telling Him how He has to do things. After all, on the Day of Pentecost, when Peter stood up to preach to the crowd that assembled, he quoted from Joel, “And in the last days it shall be, God declares . . . ‘your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams’” (Acts 2:17).

1. **OUR TALKATIVE GOD COMMUNICATES WITH OTHERS THROUGH CIRCUMSTANCES.**

 The King saw through the duplicity of some of his seers and advisors. He knew they were taking him for a ride. He felt they were making a fool of him. He wasn’t having any more of it. He wanted clear proof that they could actually interpret his dreams.

 He threatened them in no uncertain terms. Twice, he warned, “The word from me is firm . . .” (vv. 5, 8). The King was saying, “I’m serious . . . I ain’t playing with you.”

 The King’s seers faced a difficult situation, to say the least. Their back was against a wall. Do you think that made any impression on them when they couldn’t do anything to save themselves, that their doom was practically assured? Then, at the last minute, Daniel walks into the King’s presence and tells the King exactly what he had dreamed and precisely what it means.

 You have heard of foxhole religion. A soldier faces the heat of battle. He makes all kinds of promises to God as to what he will do if God will save him. God saves him, and then what happens? Does the soldier keep those promises?

 Such things don’t just happen in the foxhole. They can happen in the hospital room, in the prison cell, in the courtroom, in the unemployment line, and elsewhere.

 Sometimes, however, those vows are remembered, and those promises are kept because something genuine happened and the interaction was real.

 God can use unfortunate and even scary circumstances to bring us to the end of ourselves and to Himself.

 I want to retell a story I told you in a Sunday morning sermon back in February of this year.

 His name was Roy Robertson. He was a sailor aboard the West Virginia, which happened to be docked at Pearl Harbor on that day that will live in infamy.

 On the evening of December 6, 1941, Roy and a couple of his friends left their ship to attend a Bible study. There were about 15 men sitting on the floor in a circle. The leader asked each one to recite his favorite verse of Scripture and say a few words about it. Roy’s mind began to race. He had grown up in a Christian home and went to church three times a week, but he couldn’t recall a single verse. Finally, he remembered John 3:16, and he rehearsed it silently in his mind patiently waiting for his turn. Guess what verse the fellow sitting next to Roy chose to recite? You guessed it—John 3:16. After that humiliating experience of not being able to quote a single verse, Roy went to bed saying to himself, “Robertson, you are a fake.”

 The next morning, at 7:55, Roy was awakened by the ship alarm, which ordered the entire crew to their battle stations. The Japanese, with 360 warplanes, were attacking Pearl Harbor. Roy raced to his machine gun emplacement. But the only thing he and the others had was practice ammunition. For the first 15 minutes of the battle, Roy and his companions were firing blanks at the Japanese, hoping to scare them.

 Later, Roy confessed, “As I stood there firing fake ammunition, I thought, ‘Robertson, this is how your whole life has been—firing blanks for Christ.’ I made up my mind as Japanese bullets slammed into our ship, ‘If I escape with my life, I will get serious about following Jesus.’”

 Roy Robertson kept that commitment. He went on to help Dawson Trotman found the Navigators, which is a world-wide organization dedicated to the mission of discipling Christians.

 Do you think it is possible that any of those seers and advisors of the king said to themselves, “I’m a face, but this guy Daniel is for real”? I don’t know if it led to any of them trusting in Daniel’s God, but it sure made an impression on the King. It will be part of next week’s message, but look at what a happened in v. 46 and what King Nebuchadnezzar said in v. 47.

 God can use circumstances to get our attention and to speak to us. He can use a medical scare, a car accident, a job loss, a financial pinch, the death of a family member, and a million other things to get our attention.

 I am remined of a story I read from Philip Gulley in his little book, *Front Porch Tales.* He told about a neighbor of his named Dr. Gibbs. He wrote:

 The good doctor had some interesting theories concerning plant husbandry. He came from the “No pain, no gain” school of horticulture. He never watered his new trees, which flew in the face of conventional wisdom. Once I asked why. He said that watering plants spoiled them, and that if you water them, each successive tree generation will grow weaker and weaker. So, you have to make things rough on them and weed out the weenie trees early on . . .

 So, he never watered his trees. He’d plant an oak and, instead of watering it every morning, he’d beat it with a rolled-up newspaper. Smack! Slap! Pow! I asked him why he did that, and he said it was to get the tree’s attention.

 Do you think our loving Father ever slaps us upside our head, so to speak, to get our attention? I don’t know for sure, but I do know this: It is no use talking to someone until you’ve got their attention.

 I’m convinced that God can get our attention and speak to us through our circumstances.

1. **OUR TALKATIVE GOD COMMUNICATES WITH AND THROUGH HIS**

 **PEOPLE.**

 For whatever reason, maybe the new rookies weren’t invited, but Daniel and his three fellow Jewish friends were not present when the King issued his ultimatum and his death threat. No one had fulfilled the King’s demand; so, he was going to make good on his threat. The seers were being rounded up. Someone remembered that Daniel and the three other newbies weren’t present. The Captain of the King’s guard went to collect them. His name was Arioch.

 Arioch seemed to a decent, level-headed man. He was willing for Daniel to ask questions, and he answered them. He probably realized that the King was overreacting, but he was the King, and he had to carry out what the King ordered.

 Daniel asked for permission to talk to the King first. This was a brave thing to do. The King could have had Daniel killed instantly for his impertinence. I think, however, that the King actually liked Daniel. After all, toward the end of chapter 1, we are told that the King found Daniel and his friends ten times better than all the enchanters in his kingdom.

 The King cooled down and gave Daniel some time. Immediately, Daniel went home, talked to his Hebrew buddies, told them what was going on, and told them to start praying. Daniel prayed, and then he went to sleep.

 That’s a good pattern to keep, by the way. Pray, and then go to sleep. There is no use for you and God staying up all night. Let God be God, and go to sleep at the end of the day, and trust that He’s got your back.

 Sure enough, while Daniel was sleeping, God gave him a dream in which he revealed what the King had dreamed and what it meant. As far as we can tell, there were only four men in the entire Kingdom who trusted God, and God spoke to and through that one of those men to make known His message to the King.

 God uses those who belong to Him. If you belong to Him, God wants to use you. I have heard it said that God is far more interested in availability than ability. Are you available to Him?

 I want to close my message the way that Ray Stedman opened his sermon on a different passage than he one we are looking at today. He was preaching on Romans 12:1-2 in which Paul says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Listen to what he said:

 I was flying out of Denver, Colorado, a few years ago on my way to Peoria, Illinois. Not a lot of people go to Peoria, but I wanted to go there the worst possible way, so I went by Ozark Airlines. In the plane, I picked up the magazine that every airline has to distract the passengers from what the pilot is doing. My attention was caught by large letters on the back page that said, “When you understand that you can change the world, your life will never be the same again.” Naturally, I was curious as to what would make a dramatic change like that. I discovered this was an advertisement for Playboy magazine. The implication was that if you subscribe to Playboy, you’ll soon come to understand that you can change the world. And when you come to understand that you can change the world, your life will never be the same again. I don’t know how you react to that, but my reaction was one of anger. It made me angry that a magazine of that character—obscene, pornographic—would openly boast that it had the quality to change the world. But as I thought about that a bit, I began to see there was some truth to it.

 I can remember back twenty years ago when the moral climate of this nation was considerably different than it is today. And in some sense, Playboy and other magazines of that type have successfully changed our nation. Not for the good but for the bad. Then I thought, what a magnificent slogan this is for a Christian. That’s really what God is saying to us: “When you understand that you can change the world, your life will never be the same again.”

 You may not believe it, but I’m here to say that God wants to use us to change the world, but to do so, we are going to have to listen to Him. Then, we must go wherever He wants us to go, do whatever He wants us to do, and say whatever He wants us to say.